

Valentine

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Summary: A song challenge I/M piece that is set in my own little universe where everyone lives happily ever after.

Valentine

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**\*\*SPOILERS: \*\***Minor, Seasons 3 and 4.

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VALENTINE

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Marcus Cole ran full pelt along the corridors of Babylon 5, dodging the various lifeforms he met along the way. His mission this day was to leave a data crystal with a note outside Commander Susan Ivanova's door, ring the chime, then run like hell.

He was panting heavily as he approached her quarters and slowed to a stop to catch his breath. He leaned back against the wall, wondering at the devil that possessed him to behave this foolishly where ever Susan was concerned.

It was Valentine's day. OK, he knew that it wasn't exactly an earth custom that was celebrated on the station, but having realised the date, he was determined to tell Susan of his love for her even though it would once again be secretly.

He pulled out two crystals from his tunic and looked at them in contemplation. When he'd recorded them, either one had seemed a good option. Now, though, he realised that one of them was rather unsuitable and put it away. Pulling out the accompanying note from another pocket, he walked quietly up to her door. Fifteen minutes earlier, the computer in his quarters had confirmed that Susan was here. Taking a couple of deep breaths, he checked no one was around, then placed the objects on the floor and raised his hand to push the chime. "Here goes nothing," he muttered to himself. He pressed the button firmly, then beat a hasty retreat not hearing the light clink of the second crystal falling from his pocket and hitting the floor.

At the opposite end of the corridor, Michael Garibaldi rounded the corner just in time to see Marcus push the chime and run. Before he had a chance to call out to him, the Ranger disappeared around the other corner. Wondering what was going on, he walked up to Ivanova's quarters and spied something pink on the floor. Realising what it was, he started grinning. "Well, well, well, Marcus. Looks like I finally caught you out." He picked up the envelope and crystal and was just straightening up when Ivanova's door slid open.

"Michael!" exclaimed an obviously irritated female voice. "Didn't you hear me tell you to come in?"

Garibaldi looked up at Ivanova, still grinning. "No, I didn't. But that was probably because it wasn't me that rang your bell," he stated.

"What are you talking about? You're outside my door aren't you?" she questioned angrily.

"Yeah, but as I came around the corner I saw Marcus running off in the opposite direction."

Ivanova tutted. "Why doesn't that surprise me. I wonder what game he's playing at now," she muttered.

"I don't know, but maybe these might tell you something." Garibaldi handed her the objects he still held and leaned forward to whisper, "I think he left them for you."

Ivanova stared at the objects in confusion. "Why would he leave them out here and not give them to me himself?"

Garibaldi sighed in exasperation. "Oh, come on, Susan. Don't you know what day this is?"

"Tuesday," she replied, automatically.

The Security Chief looked heavenward for patience. "And the date?" he prompted.

"February 14th." Susan's mouth dropped open as the significance suddenly hit her. "Oh, he wouldn't," she groaned, looking back down

at the envelope with her name printed clearly on it.

She lifted her eyes and stared back into Garibaldi's amused face.  
"Yes, he would," they both said in unison.

Ivanova tore open the envelope and read the note inside. Garibaldi saw a faint blush creep up her face and leaned forward to try to read the words. "So, what's it say?"

Susan abruptly folded the paper and put it back in the envelope.  
"Mind your own business," she snapped.

"Hmm, not very romantic," Garibaldi quipped. At her thunderous expression he held up his hands in mock surrender and backed away. Then he winked at her and said, "Let me know what you're going to do to Marcus beforehand, so I can let the doc know how many pints of blood to have on standby."

Ivanova scowled and shut the door to block out Garibaldi's all too knowing, happy face. He chuckled and walked away, then stopped when he saw a crystal laying on the floor. With a frown, he picked it up and pocketed it deciding to play it when he got back to his office.

Marcus had reached the Zocalo and was having a cup of tea. He leant back in his chair, praising himself on having got away from Susan's unnoticed and dug into his pockets to find some credits for his drink. A look of horror came over his face and he groaned out loud.  
"Oh, bloody hell. I must have dropped the other crystal."

Ivanova went over to her couch then sat down and took the note out of the small envelope again. For all the way she acted in front of Michael, deep down, Susan was extremely pleased and flattered Marcus had made this gesture. Smiling, she read the words out loud.

"I cannot find within myself, the courage to go on,  
Hiding the affection, that's been in my heart so long.  
And so I now hope and pray, that I'm not doing wrong,  
By showing all I feel for you, within this perfect song."

Dying to know what the song was, she placed the crystal into the console and said, "Play".

Music filled the air. It was obviously old but had a pleasant upbeat tempo. She listened to the words intently.

They say I'm not your kind. They say that I should take you from my mind.

But that is hard to do, girl, when everything I care about is you.

What kinda boy you looking for girl

Must he be just like your favourite movie star?

What kinda boy you looking for girl

Could you give your heart to someone who is crazy about you, longing for you,

Loving you each day?

They say I'm far too lame. They say you're much too flame to want this love of mine.

But what else can I do girl, but let you know my love waits here for you.

What kinda boy you looking for girl

Must he be just like your favourite movie star?

What kinda boy you looking for girl

Are you sure I'm not the one who you should give your love to?

Darling, I would never break your heart.

Girl, I love you and I want you know whenever you need a love that's true,

My love's waiting here for you.

The music faded away and Susan was filled with a warm glow. He loved her. Her heart leapt at the thought. She had admitted to herself a long while ago that she was in love with the Ranger, but had pushed it aside when she heard his startling admission on the White Star that he was saving himself for his one true love. Since then, she had resigned herself to just being his friend and had acted as formal as possible around him so that her feelings wouldn't show.

But now there was this. Susan felt a hot anger wash over her as she suddenly realised that he'd been talking about her that day on the White Star. She got up and started pacing. The faster she walked, the angrier she made herself. "Of all the idiotic, stupid, frustrating men," she muttered.

She thought about their talks and 'moments' together in the past and it all became suddenly clear. "Oh, this is just SO like him! Always hinting, but never committing. Why didn't I see it before? And why the hell didn't he just tell me?"

She stopped in front of a mirror and looked at herself. The anger at him drained away as she took in her appearance. Her hair was severely scraped back into it's usual ponytail, the uniform was perfectly pressed. She looked soâ€|unapproachable. The perfect military officer. When was the last time she'd left her hair down and worn anything other than her uniform? She couldn't remember. She sighed. Couple her look with the way she forced herself to behave around him, it was no wonder he hadn't told her about his feelings.

> <p>

Suddenly, another thought hit her. What if Michael hadn't caught him at her door? She'd be sitting here still none the wiser. That made her mad again. Taking a hold of the band confining her hair she

ripped it out and smoothed her locks around her shoulders. "OK, Marcus Cole. You may have started this," she began, an idea forming in her head. "But I'm sure as hell gonna finish it."

Two days later, the Zocalo was it's usual hive of activity. Outside one of the shops stood Michael Garibaldi and Stephen Franklin discussing what Susan had asked them to do. Noticing their target, Garibaldi suddenly broke of his sentence and tapped Franklin's arm. "Heads up doc, here he comes."

Franklin grinned. "Good, I'm going to enjoy this."

They watched Marcus threading his way through the crowd. "Hey Marcus," called Garibaldi, raising his hand and gesturing for the Ranger to come over to them.

Marcus looked around and, noticing who was calling, walked over to them. "Mr. Garibaldi, Stephen," he greeted each one in turn. "You wanted me?"

"Yeah, we were just going to get something to eat. You want to join us?" asked Garibaldi with a smile.

"Why thank you, yes," he accepted, pleasantly surprised. They sat down at a table outside a nearby cafe and ordered some drinks.

As they looked through their menu's, Garibaldi glanced over at Franklin, then said to Marcus, "So, what do you think about this business with Ivanova and Corwin?"

Marcus looked puzzled. "What business?"

"You mean, you haven't heard?" Franklin asked, a study in shocked surprise. Garibaldi was impressed. "Susan received a data crystal and note for Valentine's day. She was asking around if anyone knew who it was from and Corwin admitted it was from him."

"Corwin?" the Ranger choked out, his eyes wide.

"Yeah, they're going out on their first date tonight." The doctor made a show of checking the time. "In fact, they should be at the Fresh Aire right aboutâ€|.now."

"What?!" gasped the Ranger. "Butâ€|."

"Yeah, surprised me too," interrupted Garibaldi, trying not to laugh at Marcus' flabbergasted expression. "In fact, I told Ivanova that, and she said something about Corwin being just the kind of boy a girl would be looking for, whatever THAT means," he added, rolling his eyes.

The two men watched in fascination as all the colour drained from Marcus' face, only to be replaced by an ever reddening hue. Jealousy and anger rose like bile in the Ranger's throat as he struggled to control the feelings that were raging through him.

Marcus stood up abruptly, his chair scraping across the floor and almost tipping over in his haste. "If you'll excuse me, there's something important I just remembered I have to do," he muttered, stalking off.

Once out of sight, Franklin started laughing. "Did you see his face? I thought he was going to explode. Jealousy can be hell."

Garibaldi grinned and nodded, then tapped his link. "Ivanova, go," came a voice. "He's on his way Commander," he informed her.

"Thanks, Michael. Out." The link beeped off.

He turned to his friend chuckling, "I hope Ivanova knows what she's doing. I wouldn't want to mess with an angry Ranger."

"Well, if he'd just told her how he felt in the first place, he wouldn't be going through this," the doctor pointed out.

"Fifty credits says he still won't tell her tonight," said Garibaldi, holding out his hand.

Stephen shook his head and took the other man's hand. "You're on."

Marcus marched through the station, his ire rising with each step. 'God! CORWIN, of all people. How dare he take advantage of the situation like this,' he fumed to himself. 'Just wait until I get my hands on that liar, he's going to wish that he'd never been born.'

He picked up his pace, determined to reach the restaurant as quickly as possible. All the while his mental tirade continued. 'I haven't bloody well been waiting two years just to have someâ€¦.SCHOOLBOY, take it all away from me now. That's MY date and I'm damn well going to have it.'

He reached the restaurant and stormed in. "Can I help you, sir?" asked the head waiter, walking up to him with a ready smile.

Marcus spied Ivanova and Corwin seated at a table at the back. As he watched, he saw her reach out and take the young man's hand. His mouth tightened grimly, "No thank you," he bit out, not taking his eyes off of the couple. "I've come to deliver a personal message to Commander Ivanova." With that, he walked off through the tables, the waiter staring bemusedly after him.

Susan looked over at Corwin. "Thanks for doing this David, I appreciate it," she said, placing her hand over his. Her eyes darted to the side and she stiffened slightly. "OK, he's here." She looked back at Corwin and saw his troubled expression. "For God's sake, look happy!"

Corwin managed a semblance of a smile, wishing fervently that he was anywhere else than sitting in this restaurant waiting for, what he guessed was, one very upset Ranger. He hadn't wanted to be a part of this charade, but Ivanova had practically made it an order.

A shadow fell over the table and Susan looked up in feigned surprise. "Marcus! Is there something I can do for you?"

The Ranger's face was a mask of barely restrained anger and his eyes shot flames as he hissed, "Yes, Susan. You can let go of his bloody hand for a start!"

Susan raised her eyebrows. "I beg your pardon?" she said, her voice cold.

Marcus ignored her and turned to Corwin. Through gritted teeth he forced out, "We both know you shouldn't be here, so I suggest you leave."

"Now just hold on a minute," objected Susan, angrily standing up. "Just who the hell do you think you are coming in here and breaking up my date?"

People seated at tables close by stopped talking and turned to view the events unfolding before them. Ignoring everyone, Marcus pulled out his Minbari fighting pike and swiftly extended it. Glaring at Corwin, he took a threatening step forward. "Need I say more?"

Corwin swallowed and looked pleadingly at Ivanova. She gave an almost imperceptible nod and he scrambled to stand up as quick as possible. As he turned to go, Marcus held out his pike to block the young man's path. Fearfully, Corwin turned his head and the Ranger leaned in close. "I'll be talking to you about this later," he promised.

Corwin nodded and Marcus retracted his pike allowing the frightened man to leave. He turned back to Ivanova who was still standing, a mutinous look on her face. He sat down at the table and placed his pike by the plate. "Sit down," he ordered, sternly.

"I will not," she replied, crossing her arms defiantly.

"Don't cause a scene, Susan," Marcus warned icily. "I'd hate to have to get up and force you in front of all these nice people."

Susan looked him in the eyes and knew he wasn't bluffing. With as much dignity as she could muster, she straightened her uniform and slowly sat down.

Garibaldi and Franklin stood outside the Fresh Aire restaurant. They'd just witnessed a very pale looking Corwin leave a few seconds earlier. He'd managed to tell them that Marcus was very angry, then left saying he had to make out his will.

"God, what I'd give to be a fly on the wall when they have that conversation they're so obviously headed for," commented Franklin.

Garibaldi shook his head and thrust his hands deep in his pockets, walking off. Franklin smiled as he heard the Security Chief's voice float back, "He won't tell her."

Back in the restaurant, Marcus watched Susan get settled in the seat and leaned forward, resting his arms on the table. "That's better. Now, I think we should talk don't you, Susan?"

"Well, considering you've just chased my date away and virtually forced me to stay, I don't have much choice, do I?," she answered, sarcastically.

"No, you don't," he agreed, abruptly. "And I'm not going to apologise for my actions either. For once, Susan you will listen to what I have to say and if afterwards you want me to leave, then I will. Agreed?"

Susan nodded, liking his forcefulness. "Agreed."

Marcus took a deep breath, his resolve to tell her everything wavering slightly. Suddenly he blurted out, "Corwin didn't leave you the data crystal and note. I did. I was just too scared of what you might say to admit it." He paused and added in a voice, raw with emotion, "And I want you to know that everything I feel for you is in that song. I would never break your heart. I love you and that love is, and has been waiting for you for two years, since I first saw you."

There, he'd said it. He stared at her apprehensively, trying to gauge her response. Her face was cold and he felt his heart break when, without any emotion, she said, "OK, I've listened. Now I want you to leave."

Marcus dropped his gaze so that she wouldn't see his hurt and nodded. He grabbed his pike, stood up and gave her a little bow. As he turned to go, she got up and grabbed his arm. He looked back at her and she smiled gently. "You didn't let me finish." At his bewildered look, she continued, "I want you to leave, go and freshen up, then meet me at my quarters in an hour for dinner."

His mouth dropped open in shock. Susan grinned at his expression. "And don't be late, we have a lot to talk about," she instructed and walked out of the restaurant leaving the amazed Ranger staring after her.

Fifty-five minutes later, Marcus was standing outside Susan's quarters wearing a fresh uniform and feeling very nervous. He couldn't believe he was actually here. More to the point, he couldn't believe Susan had asked him.

"Come," he heard her call out in answer to his ring. The door opened and he stepped in.

"You're early," Susan commented, walking out from the kitchen area and over to him. "Come and sit down, dinner's almost ready."

Marcus mumbled a thank you but stayed rooted to the spot as he took in her appearance. She'd got changed since he last saw her and now her hair was loose, falling softly over her shoulders. How his hands itched to reach out and touch it.

His eyes moved down over the fitted pale blue silk blouse she wore, taking note of the three buttons she'd left undone at the top allowing a modest show of skin. He saw her pulse beating at the base of her neck and had to fight the almost overwhelming urge to lean towards her and place his lips over it.

Swallowing hard, he continued his visual journey down, lingering over the firm thrust of her breasts under the restraining silk, before looking lower to see that she was wearing the tightest pair of trousers he'd ever seen. They moulded her shape perfectly.



Susan felt herself grow hot under his close appraisal.  
"Marcus?"

"Hmmm?" he asked, vaguely.

"Are you going to stand there all night?" she queried in amusement.  
"Dinner's going to be very lonely with just me at the table."

Marcus smiled, a light blush colouring his features. "Sorry," he apologised and sat down at the simple, yet beautifully laid out table.

Susan went into the kitchen and appeared a short while later carrying a steaming plate of food and placed it in front of him. "It's not much I'm afraid. Just odds and ends that I threw together in a kind of stew."

"It looks wonderful," he praised, smiling.

"Well, let's hope it tastes that way," she replied, carrying over her own plate and sitting down opposite him. "Oh, hold on a minute, I almost forgot something."

She got up again and much to Marcus' surprise, she cupped his chin, bent over and kissed him on the right cheek. "That's to say thank you for the poem," she told him, softly. Then she turned his face slightly and kissed him on the left cheek. "And that's to say thank you for the song." His breath caught in his throat as her lips hovered tantalisingly over his for a moment. Then she dropped her hand and pulled back, returning to her seat.

Marcus let out a frustrated sigh and commented dryly, "I knew I should have bought you some flowers as well."

Susan laughed and picked up her spoon. Marcus did the same and they both took a mouthful of food. Staring at each other, they both suddenly pulled a disgusted face.

"Yuck!" exclaimed Susan, spitting hers out. "That's revolting."

Marcus swallowed his, then started coughing loudly. "Just needs a little salt," he managed to gasp out.

Susan looked at his reddened face and started laughing. Marcus soon joined her. "Come on," she said, standing up. "Let's go out and find a place to eat where the food won't kill us."

They found a small restaurant in the Zocalo and had a nice, quiet, edible dinner. Afterwards, they walked around a couple of shops, chatting easily with each other. Nothing had been said about their feelings for each other yet, both just content with seeing how the date went.

They'd just left a gift shop when Garibaldi and Franklin walked up behind them. "Well, look who we have here, Dr. Franklin," they heard Garibaldi say. They turned and saw the two men grinning widely at them.

"Yes, what an pleasant surprise, Mr. Garibaldi," replied Franklin.

Then he frowned and cocked his head towards his friend confidentially, before whispering loudly, "But I thought the Commander was seeing Mr. Corwin tonight."

Garibaldi whispered, just as loudly back, "She was. But I heard Mr. Corwin was taken ill and had to leave suddenly."

"OK, you've had your fun," said Susan, looking at them sternly. "Did you two actually want something or are you just being a general nuisance?"

"Uh yeah. I've got something I think belongs to Marcus." Garibaldi pulled out a data crystal and held it up with a smile. "You must have dropped it the other day when I saw you leaving Susan's quarters."

"You saw me?" gasped Marcus. His mind started racing at the implication, the last few hours suddenly taking on new meaning and he turned to Susan. "You knew, didn't you?" he accused, his eyes narrowed. "This has all been a set-up hasn't it?"

Susan knew better than to deny it. "Yes. And if I hadn't, we wouldn't be standing here now," she pointed out matter-of-factly. "Two years is long enough for anyone to make their move Marcus, I got tired of waiting." She looked at him a little nervously, wondering how he would take the joke. When he just stared at her in silence, she said, "Mad at me?"

Marcus knew he should have been annoyed but somehow couldn't stop the grin that was tugging at the corners of his mouth. "Actually, I'm rather flattered that you went to all this trouble."

Susan looked relieved. "So you should be. It took me two days and a lot of favours to arrange for Corwin to have the same time off as me."

Marcus looked a little uncomfortable at the mention of the young man's name. "Ah, yes, Corwin. I was ratherâ€¦short with him earlier. I'd better go and apologise."

Susan took hold of both his hands. "He can wait until tomorrow. I've got plans for this evening," she murmured, stepping closer to him.

Marcus forgot all about where they were and who was watching, when she raised her face lovingly up to his. "You have?" he whispered back, staring intently into her eyes.

Susan gave the barest of nods and focussing on her partially opened mouth, Marcus slowly bent his head to kiss her. Before their lips touched however, the spell was broken by the sound of Garibaldi clearing his throat very loudly. They broke apart and looked over to see both men still grinning broadly.

"What?" Susan snapped.

The Security Chief raised his eyebrows and held up the crystal.

"Ah, yes, thank you Mr. Garibaldi," began Marcus, reaching out to take it from him and placing it in his tunic pocket. "I wondered what

had happened to this."

"I'll bet you did," commented the other man.

Marcus looked at him sharply and his worried gaze clashed with Garibaldi's amused one.

"What's on it," asked Susan, curiously.

"Nothing. Just some data I recorded," Marcus told her, dismissively.

"Yeah, but it's worth listening to Commander," Garibaldi informed her. "In fact, I think you'd find it VERY interesting." Having said that, he gestured for Franklin to leave and as they walked past the couple, Garibaldi winked at the Ranger and slapped him on the back saying, "Good luck, pal."

"What was all that about?" asked Susan with a frown.

"I have no idea. I've always found that Mr. Garibaldi's sense of humour leaves something to be desired," he replied caustically, glaring at the man's retreating back.

Susan looked at Marcus' expression thoughtfully. "Do you want to go back to my quarters and have a drink?"

He turned back and smiled. "I'd love to."

Fifteen minutes later they were back in Susan's room and she was preparing a drink. "You can play that data crystal if you like," she suggested, nonchalantly from the kitchen.

"Ah, no, that's OK. There's really nothing of any importance on it," he replied, hoping that she wouldn't continue to push the issue.

"Alright," she said, walking over to him with a smile.

His eyes narrowed suspiciously. She was giving in too easily. He watched her approach him and drew in a sharp breath as she laid her hands flat against his chest, then slowly moved them up to remove his cloak. She let it drop to the ground then ran her hands back around the front of his tunic. "Did I ever tell you how good you look in this uniform?"

Mutely, he shook his head, his breathing becoming shallow.

"Well you do," she reiterated, moving her hands down to his waist.

He closed his eyes with a sigh and it was a moment before he realised that her hands had stopped roaming and were digging deep into his pockets. His eyes snapped open in time to see her pull out the data crystal with a triumphant smile on her face.

"Susan!" he cried, trying to snatch it from her grasp. "That wasn't very fair."

She dodged out of his way, laughing and turned towards the console.

Marcus grabbed her waist from behind and held her fast.

"Give me the crystal, Susan," he ordered, firmly. She shook her head, giggling. He turned her around and tried to wrestle it from her grasp, while still attempting to hold her still.

Suddenly she jumped and cried out in pain, "OOOOWWWW!"

Marcus released her immediately. "I'm SO sorry, Susan. Did I hurt you?" he asked in concern.

"No," she replied with a grin on her face. Before he could react, she was at the console and inserting the crystal.

Marcus grimaced as he realised he'd been conned. "Well that was very mature," he observed in a sulky tone.

Her answer was to turn and look at him smugly. "Play," she ordered the computer, brightly.

"Susan, I really don't want you to listen to this," Marcus pleaded earnestly. "Please."

It was too late. A heavy pulsating beat filled the room and Marcus groaned. Susan looked puzzled. "What's this?"

A voice started singing:

You are an obsession. I cannot sleep. I am a possession, unopened at your feet.

There's no balance, no equality, be still I will not except defeat.

She looked over at Marcus who was turning a very bright shade of red.

I will have you, yes, I will have you. I will find a way and I will have you.

Like a butterfly, a wild butterfly, I will collect you and capture you.

Her eyes widened at the words and Marcus groaned and put a hand up to his forehead to cover his eyes as he remembered the lines that followed.

You are an obsession, you're my obsession.

Who do you want me to be to make you sleep with me?

You are an obsession, you're my obsession.

Who do you want me to be to make you sleep with me?

He peeked through his fingers and saw that Susan's mouth had dropped open and she looked in shock. He shut his eyes again and wished fervently that he'd never recorded the stupid thing in the first place. He'd done it after she'd made yet another dig at him and was feeling particularly low. The song continued, along with his

embarrassment. He was sure it hadn't been this long when he'd recorded it.

My fantasy's have turned to madness. And now my goodness has turned to badness.

My need to possess you has consumed my soul. My life is trembling I have no control.

I will have you, yes, I will have you. I will find a way and I will have you.

Like a butterfly, a wild butterfly, I will collect you and capture you.

You are an obsession, you're my obsession.

Who do you want me to be to make you sleep with me?

You are an obsession, you're my obsession.

Who do you want me to be to make you sleep with me?

The music faded out and silence filled the room. Marcus risked another look and saw Susan staring at him intently. He dropped his hand and tried to smile but it ended up looking more like a grimace.

Susan saw his nervousness and suddenly started laughing. "I can't believe you actually recorded this."

If it were possible the Ranger's face coloured even more. "It was done in a weak moment. I'd never have dared send it to you."

"Why not? If I'd have known you were that desperate, I wouldn't have waited two more days," she told him with a giggle.

"Oh, very funny, Susan," he replied, dejectedly.

Susan laughed even more and suddenly strode over, stopping in front of him. He let out a gasp of surprise as she wound her arms around his neck and pulled his head down to hers, their lips meeting in a heated kiss. After a second's hesitation, his own arms slid around her waist and crushed her to him. His hands moved urgently over her back and in her hair as he strived to be as near to her as possible. Susan let out a small moan when he responded to the kiss and as his tongue met and duelled with hers, she pressed herself even closer to him.

The need for air separated them eventually and they looked into each other's flushed faces, breathing heavily.

"Oh Marcus, I love you," she whispered, passionately.

Marcus felt his heart turn over at her declaration and smiled. "I love you too, Susan."

"And I'm glad you've waited all this time for me," she continued.

"I'm glad too, Susan," he replied.

"And as for me wanting you to be anyone else so that I'd sleep with youâ€¦|..," she paused.

Marcus frowned. "Yes?"

"Well, I was just thinking about the Centauriâ€¦|â€¦|..," she began with a mischievous grin.

Marcus returned her smile with one of his own. "Well, I may not be as well 'equipped' as the Centauri but what I lack in number, I'm sure I can make up with in enthusiasm."

Susan pulled slowly away, then took him by his hand and led him towards the bedroom. "Let's find out shall we?"

Marcus sighed contentedly as he entered her bedroom, watching her sit down on the bed and look at him expectantly. Everything he'd ever dreamed of was wrapped up in this clever, beautiful, wonderful woman in front of him and although problems would arise from time to time, the one thing he knew he could be certain of, was that life with Susan was going to be very, very interesting.

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